



Westfield

Local Heroes

2019

Westfield Local Heroes is a community recognition and grants program, designed to shine the spotlight on those people who connect and enrich their local communities across Australia and New Zealand.

Individuals are nominated by their local communities, with the outcome of a public vote determining the three successful 2019 nominees for every Westfield centre. In total, we are recognising 121 Westfield Local Heroes across Australia and New Zealand in 2019.

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Each of the affiliated organisations of the Westfield Local Heroes have received a grant to support their work. Westfield will award 121 grants across Australia and New Zealand – totalling \$1.2 million.

We congratulate all the 2019 nominees for being recognised by their communities and thank them for the important contribution they all make to improving social wellbeing in their local areas.

westfield.com.au/local-heroes westfield.co.nz/local-heroes

Westfield

Knox
VIC



"We strive to give people the opportunity to hear their voices again and express themselves through song," says Wendy, who has recovered her voice after her stroke but is unable to interpret touch on her right side.

Generous stroke survivor helps others find their voice

Wendy Lyons — Stroke A Chord Choir

Passionate, Enthusiastic, Inspirational

Stroke survivor Wendy Lyons started the Stroke A Chord Choir in 2010 when she met other survivors who could sing despite losing the ability to speak.

"We strive to give people the opportunity to hear their voices again and express themselves through song," says Wendy, who has recovered her voice after her stroke but is unable to interpret touch on her right side.

She is excited to have been voted a Westfield Local Hero. "It's so humbling that many people care to vote."

The choir sings across a broad range of musical genres and rehearses weekly in East Ringwood.

Its concerts are inspiring events and bring much joy to the audience, who typically leave on a high, full of admiration for the performers.

"We see many of the stroke survivors look happier and able to communicate better because of the choir," Wendy says.

"We've got our 10th birthday coming up, and we definitely want a special party to thank all the people and the council who have helped us start the choir and keep the choir going."

The choir also seeks to educate the general public about stroke and to raise awareness about the difficulties of living in a community when you have no speech.

Wendy, who has also set up an art group called Brushstrokes, has participated in research and has received several awards for her work. These include the Life after Stroke National Stroke Foundation Award, an Australia Day Volunteer Award, The Stroke Association of Victoria Appreciation Award and a Yooralla Volunteer Award.

The mother of five daughters has also published an inspirational autobiography, *Left of Tomorrow: A Journey of Stroke Recovery*.

Westfield Local Heroes are nominated and voted for by their communities, with the three top finalists per Westfield centre each awarded a \$10,000 grant for their affiliated organisation. Stroke A Chord Choir will use its grant to print choir booklets and to pay for ongoing expenses such as hall rental and music copyright.

"We can do extra things to make people happy and put on more concerts," says Wendy.



"I am passionate about assisting survivors of sexual assault to overcome the horrific events that have occurred and to work towards decreasing the prevalence of sexual assault in the community," says Donna.

Kitchen conversation leads to healing action

Donna Jordan — Hands Off Foundation

Compassionate, Dedicated, Energetic

Donna Jordan came up with the idea for the Hands Off Foundation during a kitchen table conversation about helping survivors of sexual assault to heal.

Under her leadership, the foundation has grown into a charity that provides tangible emergency support in the form of care packs with necessary items and shopping vouchers. It also provides survivors with opportunities that support their healing.

Donna coordinates fundraising and works with the Centre Against Sexual Assault to ensure each client receives what they feel will help them the most, not what has been selected for them.

"Beneficiaries include children, men and women of all ages and backgrounds," says Donna.

Although the foundation has won previous awards, she feels the community has given her validation

for her hard work by voting her a Westfield Local Hero. "It says the community is behind us, and we need that to keep going."

One of Donna's goals is to expand the variety of opportunities the foundation offers. For example, it was recently able to sponsor a 14-year-old girl for part-time employment at a horse-riding school, instead of offering 10 horse-riding lessons.

"I am passionate about assisting survivors of sexual assault to overcome the horrific events that have occurred and to work towards decreasing the prevalence of sexual assault in the community," says Donna.

Through the foundation, survivors know someone in the community cares for their wellbeing and is there for them during their recovery journey.

Apart from her work with the foundation, Donna has been a yoga teacher for 30 years and is also an active supporter of Oz Child and has fostered children from different backgrounds. "It is my belief that all children should feel loved and safe," she says.

Westfield Local Heroes are nominated and voted for by their communities, with the three top finalists per Westfield centre each awarded a \$10,000 grant for their affiliated organisation. The Hands Off Foundation will use its funds to provide more support to more survivors.

"We want to help people in more meaningful ways, like giving opportunities for people," says Donna.



"My commitment has resulted in a support system for a community that would otherwise quite likely be misunderstood, underestimated and marginalised," says Mel.

Mum uses lived experience to help people with autism

Mel Spencer — Different Journeys

Dedicated, Selfless, Courageous

"The bigger the challenge, the bigger the opportunity for growth" is a philosophy close to Mel Spencer's heart.

Mel and her three children are on the autism spectrum and she has overcome significant personal hardship in her life, which inspires her to strive for more for her family and for others.

In addition to being the primary carer for her children, she is a dedicated advocate for people on the autism spectrum.

In 2016, she co-founded Different Journeys, which holds four events a month to share valuable life skills and reduce the social isolation of people with autism.

Most of the committee members are on the autism spectrum or have a family member with autism, which means they can use their lived experience to help the 400 members.

"My commitment has resulted in a support system for a community that would otherwise quite likely be misunderstood, underestimated and marginalised," says Mel.

To be voted a Westfield Local Hero is a "very humbling" experience, she says.

"It means that we are creating more awareness regarding autism, which in turn means more acceptance and inclusion. The journey for families, teens and adults with autism is made better by connecting with the world and not feeling so alone."

Despite her busy life, Mel manages to attend all four monthly events and knows the name of every attendee.

"Most of my time is dedicated to Different Journeys," she says.

"I see each challenge as an opportunity to take Different

Journeys further and to ensure support for the autism community continues to grow."

Westfield Local Heroes are nominated and voted for by their communities, with the three top finalists per Westfield centre each awarded a \$10,000 grant for their affiliated organisation. Different Journeys will use its grant to expand its events to a new area, Banyule. It will also provide autism peer-support training to carers and event staff.

"This recognition will help raise our profile and potentially connect with more individuals and their families with autism," says Mel.

"It may help them find their tribe or people who speak the same language and just 'get' each other."

Your 2019 Finalists

Darren Hill

Rotary Club of Knox

Darren Hill has always tried to do the right thing. But he wanted to do more for his community and joined the Rotary Club of Knox as a vehicle to channel this energy. Darren has taken responsibility for managing the club and providing new direction, and he has taken the membership along with him. "Our purpose is to support community, specifically youth," says Darren. "We use the skills and knowledge of members and local services such as Harrison Uniting Care, Anchor and Knox Infolink where the need arises, so we do not need to re-invent the wheel."

Alice Garrick

Community Casseroles

Alice Garrick has a gift for making people feel cared for. Five years ago, she started Community Casseroles to provide food to those in need. She started preparing meals in her kitchen with a few friends for new mothers in the area. Now Alice brings dozens of volunteers together for cook-ups to connect while they prepare 1,000 frozen meals a month for people who need support for any reason, from bereavement to social upheaval. Alice does most of the deliveries herself and often sits, listens and cries with the recipients.

Shusannah Morris

Life's Little Treasures Foundation

Shusannah Morris's daughter Molly-Rose was born at 25 weeks weighing 880 grams. Shusannah spent five harrowing months with her at Melbourne's Royal Women's Hospital, where she met four other mothers going through the same thing. Life's Little Treasures was born when they decided to extend their circle of support to other families and do something about the lack of information and community care they experienced. Fourteen years later, thanks mainly to Shusannah's efforts, the charity is active at Box Hill, Monash Children's, the Mercy, the Royal Women's Hospitals and another 120 neonatal hospitals around Australia.

Recognising all of our 2019 Nominees

Lisa ALSTON
Bayswater Football Club

Mario ANDERS
Children's Tumour Foundation

Graham CRICHTON
Ferntree Gully Fire Brigade

Alice GARRICK
Community Casseroles

Darren HILL
Rotary Club of Knox

Lauren HUNT
Kiss Goodbye to MS

Donna JORDAN
Hands Off Foundation Inc

Chuentat KANG
GJS Intellectual Company Australia

Les KENNEDY
Australian Air League Victoria Group

Jaime LEE
Make-A-Wish Foundation Australia

Wendy LYONS
Stroke a Chord Choir

Shusannah MORRIS
Life's Little Treasures Foundation

Robert NASH
Nunawading Cricket Club

Fiona QUINN
Aussie Veterans Op Shop

Melinda SPENCER
Different Journeys

Danielle STOREY
Eastern Innovation Business
Centre Pty Ltd

Nicola TOUHEY
Wantirna South Primary School

If you or anyone you know would like more information on what support is available:

AUSTRALIA

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

MensLine: 1300 78 99 78

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732

NEW ZEALAND

Lifeline: 0800 543 354

Suicide Crisis Helpline: 0508 828 865

Kidsline: 0800 54 37 54

Depression Helpline: 0800 111 757

Samaritans: 0800 726 666

Family Violence Information Line: 0800 456 450

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